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An Experiences Of Identification And Valorisation Of The Rural Landscape In Italy / Peano, Attilia; Voghera, Angioletta. - In: SCIENCE JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING RESEARCH. - ISSN 2276-7495. - ELETTRONICO. - (2015), pp. 1-13. [10.7237/sjeer/300]

*Availability:*

This version is available at: 11583/2619764 since: 2016-12-16T13:32:18Z

*Publisher:*

science journal publication

*Published*

DOI:10.7237/sjeer/300

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# An Experiences of Identification and Valorization of the Rural Landscape in Italy

<sup>1</sup>Attilia Peano

Full Professor of

Urban and Regional Planning, died in 2013.

<sup>2</sup>Angioletta Voghera

Associate Professor of Urban and

Regional Planning, DIST- Interuniversity Department of

Regional and Urban Studies and Planning

POLITECNICO DI TORINO

E-mail: [angioletta.voghera@polito.it](mailto:angioletta.voghera@polito.it)

Accepted on July 01, 2015

**Abstract:** According to the European Landscape Convention (ELC, 2000) and the new Italian Code for Heritage and Landscape (2008), the valorisation of the landscape is a central issue for territorial policies and projects. An experimentation of the guidelines of the ELC and the Italian Code is research in the Turin Province developed with many institutional, economic and social actors, aimed at promoting awareness of territorial values and identifying policies, programmes and projects. The research leads to the formulation of valorisation and development projects in a number of areas of the Turin Province in the Piemonte Region (Italy), concluding with a 'Manifesto' for the landscape and local rural development aimed at defining guidelines for policies and planning. The Manifesto proposes a functional, social, economic and symbolic link between the town and the countryside as a territorial system, ready to share values and resources. This implies an agreement on the natural and social cohesion of the town and the countryside. This agreement is geared towards regulating the overall system in an innovative way, affecting not only the visible landscape, but also the inhabitable and liveable landscapes. These rural landscape projects are an experimentation aimed at valorising the quality of the territory; they constitute guiding principles and methods for the construction of a new image and new governance practices.

**Keywords:** European Landscape Convention, Rural Landscape, Interdisciplinary Landscape Analysis, Landscape Guidelines, Landscape Projects.

- The temporal dimension of the landscape policies including the past and the contemporary territorial processes;
- The policies for the landscape integrating protection, management and planning (art. 1f) to promote a suitable socio-economic development of the territories.

These cultural innovations propose the interaction of natural, historic and cultural heritage and landscape protection as a programme of actions, intended to define guidelines for planning and projects; these projects are based on the identification of the values of each landscape (art. 6c), according to the interest of 'the civil society, private organisations, and public authorities' (art. 6a) and to the processes of the territory, managed by plans (CoE, 2004). Similarly to the Convention, the new Italian Code for Heritage and Landscape (DL n. 42/2004; DL n. 157/2006; DL n. 63/2008) promotes the 'protection and the development of landscape quality in landscape plans' (art. 135) in order to produce sustainable use of the territory and enhance the social quality of life. To this end some Regions are trying to implement the Code by upgrading the regional landscape plans that should have a cognitive, normative, programmatic and operative content in order to increase the quality of the territory. This innovative framework has stimulated many local initiatives aimed at the valorisation of the landscape as a cultural and socio-economic resource with regard to sustainability.

This paper describes research that has been conceived as trialling of the European Landscape Convention and the new Italian Code for Heritage and Landscape (2004, 2006, 2008), executed by a trade association, the Turin Province branch of Coldiretti (a farmers' association), and triggered by the perspectives of change in rural activities. The new Common Agricultural Policy scenarios (CAP; EC, DG Agr, 1999; CE, DG Agr., 2003; DG Agr, 2013) promote the environmental compatibility of the productive techniques, the valorisation of the quality of the rural products and the multisectorial and multifunctional development of the rural territory with the set-up within the landscape.

## Introduction

### 1. From Analysis to 'Manifesto' for Rural Landscape Valorisation

According to the European Landscape Convention (ELC; CoE, 2000), the valorisation of the quality of the landscape is a central issue for territorial policies and projects aimed at developing the landscape as 'an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity' and an economic resource to implement the sustainable development (art. 5a). In this respect, the Convention promotes:

- Spatial actions with regard to the overall landscape of the territory, including the natural, rural and urban spaces, and the excellent and ordinary landscapes;

The CAP strengthens rural developments as an improvement of the rural environment, as a conservation of biodiversity, and as a valorisation of the rural cultural identity, also developing local participation in the management of the rural landscape (EC, 1996; Rega, 2014). Therefore the landscape will help to stop the inexorable marginalisation of rural society and to develop new attractiveness to the rural works and lifestyles (CEC, 1999).

The farmers' association has promoted landscape research in the Piemonte Region (Italy) as a key component of the future development of its own economy. As regards the promotion of rural development, the research has also aimed at developing an awareness of territorial values and at identifying policies, programmes and projects; the objective is to stimulate the institutions, in order to promote local values, occupational advancement, and socio-economic innovation.

The research has developed with the continuous involvement and the participation of the trade association and with a management committee made up of representatives of different levels from the institutions and rural social and economic associations in the Province of Turin (Chambers of Commerce, Confartigianato, Torino Internazionale, the CRT Foundation) that support the participation of the rural local actors. This has led to the formulation of valorisation and development projects in two study areas (the Pinerolo and the Canavese districts), concluding with a Manifesto (see Figure 1) for landscape and rural development aimed at providing the institutions and stakeholders with some guidelines for policies, planning and projects. The Manifesto proposes a functional, social, economic and symbolic link between town and countryside as an expanded territorial system, ready to share values and resources. This implies an agreement on natural and social cohesion between town and countryside. This agreement is geared towards 'regulating' the overall system in an innovative way, affecting not only the visible landscape, but also the 'flows' that built the inhabitable and liveable landscapes.

**Fig 1.** A 'Manifesto' for the Landscape and Rural Development.

## 2. A Multidisciplinary Interpretative Grid

The identification and the evaluation of the complexity of the rural landscape were marked out on an interpretative methodology derived from a multidisciplinary interrelated approach. This approach was based on the contribution of geographical and socio-economic, historical, ecological and spatial planning studies tested on the two study areas (the Pinerolo and Canavese districts). The two selected areas are representative of many other provincial areas in terms of landscape diversity, agronomic production potential, and significant or limited presence of 'insularisation' caused by urban infrastructure and sprawl.

This method is founded on an interpretative grid (Peano, 2006), capable of restoring the history and of guiding the transformation processes and the prospective scenarios:

- A physico-geographical analysis identifying morphological, hydro graphic and climatic structural systems for the rural areas (Morhange, 1994, 128), and a socio-economic interpretation of the agricultural organisation, farm typologies, land management, production typology and dynamics and development programmes.
- A diachronic analysis of the historic settlements relating to the organisation of the rural landscape, in order to identify character areas;
- An ecological interpretation with regard to the transformation of rural use with an acknowledgement of the different typologies of rural landscape (their functionality, processes of the ecological systems).
- The spatial planning analysis of the structure of the rural territory, with reference to the relationships between the overall infrastructure network and the rural road access, settlement typology and forms, organisation of the agricultural territory, role played by policies and plans.

It merges the wealth and complexity of the processes and the dynamics that have transformed and continue to transform the rural landscape. The integration of the approaches leads to the identification of the rural landscape character areas.

The complexity of the contribution of each discipline has permitted, by means of specific 'descriptors', the identification of a mosaic of values, processes, pressures and critical areas (Brunetta, Voghera, 2008, 6). This mosaic is useful for focusing on the relationships between the various interpretations in order to produce some guidelines.

## 3. Landscape Analysis

### 3.1. The Disciplinary Interpretation of the Landscape

The multidisciplinary interpretative grid has permitted us to read the structure of the geographical forms that supports the historical transformation of agricultural customs and that conditions the ecological functionality of the various parts of the territory (Summerby-Murray, 2001, 43). Where the city and the country intersect, the fringe areas constitute more critical zones in ecological and landscape terms (Vilain, 1999, 54).

In fact, as emerges from the geographical interpretation, nearly everywhere the rural landscape bears the brunt of the progressive expansion of the urban area into the surrounding zones. The forms of peri-urbanisation and spread of the city which have reached the valley floor and the hill and the plain now reach the industrial areas outside the city. The industrial areas have an historical presence in almost all the valleys in the Pinerolo and the Canavese districts. From here the anthropic presence rapidly reaches the mountain areas marked by tourism, mostly in winter, linked to hotels and second homes. This hotchpotch of shapes in the traditional rural landscape with ramifications of the city landscape requires the formulation of some descriptive categories capable of

expressing these new forms of integration among the various uses of the territory.

The historical interpretation identifies the 'structural backbone' of these territories, in the network of primary infrastructures and of a series of other connections; this system clarifies the identity of the relations between the power centres and their territorial surroundings. This historical shape is maintained strongly in the morphology of sites and settlements (Veyeret, Le maitre, 1996, 180).

The map 'Carta Topografica degli Stati in Terraferma di S.M. il Re di Sardegna alla scala di 1 a 50.000 opera del Corpo Reale dello Stato Maggiore' dated 1852 (see Figure 2) records the variety of cultivations in use in the nineteenth-century landscape and the complex links between the suburban settlement and the ramified expansion of farmsteads and outlying boroughs. It gives a picture of the territory in 1852 which was characterised by urban nuclei surrounded by different land uses that guaranteed a degree of self-sufficiency in food and a diversity of the landscape partly detectable today.

**Fig. 2.** Rural soil uses on the 1852 map ('Carta Topografica degli Stati in Terraferma di S.M. il Re di Sardegna alla scala di 1 a 50.000 opera del Corpo Reale dello Stato Maggiore').

With the advent of mechanisation, the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, modern agriculture has significantly modified its relationship with the production environment, abandoning the traditional tendency to exploit outside conditions in order to adapt to the local environment (Pinchemel, 1987, 21). Indeed modern agriculture, with its changes in the rural parcel scale, specialised production and modern technology, has led to an oversimplification of the food chain and hence to a drastic decline in the landscape assets (Donadieu, 1999, 38).

A result of this is the progressive insularisation of the landscape into micro-ecosystems in which animal and vegetable populations do not have sufficient numbers of living individuals to ensure genetic diversity. Species are no longer able to adapt and reproduce, so they become extinct. The graph form of the ecological functionality of the rural areas clearly restores the organisation of the overall environmental system, showing the areas of energy resources (source areas), and also the connections useful for dealing with the obstacles and interruptions to these connections (see Figure 3).

Furthermore, it is important to note the presence of significant portions of historical agrarian landscapes, such as the vineyard areas that are a strong and enduring element of the territory, and the leftover patches of closed-field landscape between the districts of Baldissero C.se, Agliè, Oglianico and Busano, in Orco, as well as Nole, Caselle, San Maurizio C.se and Stura.

**Fig. 3.** Ecological analysis of the Pinerolo study case. In dark grey: source areas that need to be connected by ecological network in east-west direction .

The important role played by this type of landscape is widely recognised today. This landscape is capable of imitating the

ecological processes of unspoilt environments, especially with regard to the increased fragility of agro systems and the reduction in biological diversity. Hence there is a need to safeguard and to restore these areas, protecting them from the progressive erosion imposed by the continuous advance of the fringe areas.

### 3.2 Rural Landscape Typologies

Aimed at identifying different scenarios, according to the ELC, the research has recognised three large groups of rural landscapes: the 'stabilised' landscapes, generated from historical, environmental and process conditions with stabilising effects; the 'destabilised' landscapes; and the landscapes 'in transformation' (Figure 4).

**Fig. 4.** Stable, unstable and 'in transformation' landscapes. An analysis of the Pinerolo study case.

Stability and stabilisation, destabilisation and transformation may occur due to the effect of exceptional natural events (e.g. natural catastrophes, such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, eruptions, etc.) or, more generally—and with shorter- or more long-lasting effects—as a consequence of changes occurring in economic, social, cultural, administrative, demographic and climatic conditions, etc., and in the relationship system through which such factors are interwoven and made to interact within the framework of a certain situation in terms of territorial conditions and the landscape. A stabilised landscape is defined therefore as a configuration of territory and settlement systems capable of presenting itself with one or more clearly defined images in terms of 'boundaries'. These latter specify their position with respect to another landscape configuration or to heterogeneous elements which are non-marginal and do not belong to that territory and to that settlement area. A 'stabilised' landscape may be identified by reason of very clear, figurative and spatial evidence of its main structural components and on account of the presence of a connective fabric principally congruent in terms of organisational and functional efficiency, economic factors and also cultural identity, apart from any symbolic components.

Consequently, a destabilised landscape may be defined as a configuration of a territory and settlement system which presents evident and prevalent elements of heterogeneity, incongruence and a lack of efficiency, unaesthetic appearance and an absence of economic integrity—from both the functional and figurative points of view—with respect to original schemes (i.e. those of a stabilised landscape, as would be evident, for example, from cartography or from the outcome of historical and geographic studies). This landscape does not allow us to identify symptoms or signs of evolutionary trends towards more stable future configurations as an effect of self-regulatory aspects and by virtue of possible policies.

Finally, a landscape in transformation can be defined as a configuration where we may speak in terms of a transitoriness, in the sense that trends may be detected, which would be appropriate in the medium to long term to cause a prevalence of a new conformation which may be assigned to the family of stabilised landscapes. For the purpose of

identification, classification and the 'mosaic' tiling of the principle types of landscape, a scale of 1:10,000 (Figure 4) was adopted which allowed us to insert typological references for the description and representation of the organisation and outline of the land, of buildings and the rural fabric, of the aggregation of settlement buildings—in accordance with the multiform relations between social and private spaces—and of structure, which interprets the relationships between the territorial extension of productive units (for example, farmhouse or dairy-farm complexes) and the typology of productive installations.

This analysis has led to the identification of aspects of the morphology and of settlement landscapes, detectable in both the so-called 'integral' rural areas and also in situations which we may define as marginal, with respect to urban areas and those areas compromised by infrastructuring not connected to agricultural production activities. This operational perspective is that of a strong innovation of landscapes beside that of protection. While underpinning elements of a valorisation strategy, on the one hand, it was possible to identify landscapes bordering on those which are stable and in a state of transition and, on the other, landscapes that are still 'integral'. In these landscapes, policies, plans and projects may have a stabilising effect on the ongoing processes of transformation and also a destabilisation effect or, finally, may cause transformation to follow a certain route, whereby they act as 'accelerators', deterrents or elements of consolidation of the processes or may also present a combination of some of these possibilities (see paragraph 4 and Figure 5).

In this view, rotation-land landscapes, recognised as stable and 'intact' in both ecological and landscape terms, must be subject to an intervention aimed at ensuring protection and sustainable management. The 'fringe' landscapes between town and country, which are recognised as 'landscapes in transformation', require planning and management guidelines established to direct the course of their evolution within the context of an ecosystem and morphological integration. Fig. 5. The spatial planning analysis, useful to define the guidelines for the sustainable valorisation of the territory, is based on two related indicators: the 'agronomic value' (Ra) and the 'landscape diversity' (Dp) of the two study areas. Representing the two areas in a diagram ( $x = \text{the Dp values}$ ,  $y = \text{Ra values}$ ), the distribution shows an inverse relationship between the two indicators.

#### 4. A Project for Rural Landscape Development

In order to renew the identity of the landscape, the economy and the local rural culture, some guidelines have been formulated for the stability and evolution of the rural territory. The policies for improving the environmental and functional systems and the indications for local priority landscape projects constitute a set of integrated actions for the creation of a landscape, the multidimensional innovation of agricultural areas and the recreation of cohesion between town and countryside. The improvement of the environmental system is based on the construction of a system hierarchy that aims to conserve the areas of greater ecological value and to refunctionalise the ecological corridors, eliminating barriers.

The result is a project of an ecological structure of the territory. The functional reorganisation, linked to the efficiency of the mobility system and facilities, enables the multifunctional use of the territory and the multisectorial use of the rural economy. The result is the creation of an integrated system of ecological and landscape networks based on the regeneration of urban centres and roadway infrastructures.

The aim of this action, integrated with planning goals and with the 2007–2013 Regional Rural Development Plan, is to promote socio-economic and territorial valorisation policies in order to support agro-industrial lines, mass and niche products, and to encourage mutual relations between the town and the countryside. These strategies are integrated with the project management of the territories—consolidated through the Community Leader Plus Initiative and with Territorial Pacts, the DOCUP (Regional Operational Programmes), interregional projects, Development Plans for highland communities, the 'Agenda 21' Provincial Authorities project, and by the ATL 2 'Montagnedoc' project—which emphasise and refer to an integrated valorisation of resources in rural territories, the promotion of the local identity and innovation of economic activities. The issue raised is to involve operators in the territory with a view to creating a system-based approach and integrating the various economic activities.

These perspectives require the creation of a cohesion agreement between the city and the rural territory, useful to both. Indeed, on the one hand, the rural world follows production models that are highly conditioned by the urban world, both in terms of information and of market demands, so limiting the autonomy of the rural world. On the other hand, the city creates negative impacts on agriculture and its resources. Furthermore, the demands of society on agriculture have differed. Solidarity links, which used to be exemplary in rural areas, have been destroyed and today it is impossible for farmers to participate in spatial planning decisions. Farmers still have control over a large amount of land, but they have no influence on decisions concerning the exploitation of resources. This crisis in the rural world is set against the urban crisis. The resulting imbalance can be described in this way: the de-territorialisation of the countryside constitutes a waste of resources, and the excessive territorialisation of the city leads to a progressive reduction of primary resources (such as water, soil, air, etc.). Therefore the system appears to be in complete disarray.

The 'cohesion agreement' between town and countryside provides an integration of the two systems, placing them together, each with its own responsibilities, rights and duties. The natural and social agreement between town and country may be the way to give a new meaning to them both in terms of sustainable development. Only in this way can we pursue a useful long-term development to bring added values. Multifunctional agricultural enterprise should be characterised by the creation of sectors closely linked to agricultural production and also capable of providing services and diversified products (quality products and/or organic or biodynamic produce, integrated rural tourism activities, pedagogical activities, therapy, rehabilitation or social integration work, eco-musical programmes etc.). The rural

buildings' re-use and landscape restoration have direct consequences on tourism. In this context, the integration of agricultural production, rural tourism and material culture becomes an opportunity for development and the reactivation of skills and competences for the regeneration of the local culture. Even the recovery of 'know-how' and material culture is not to be understood as a return to the past, but rather as a creative innovation of local rural production. To valorise the rural landscape in a multidimensional perspective, it is important to reconsider the ecological, cultural and aesthetic value of rural landscape management. It implies actions linked to settlements, new production choices and landscape organisation, and implementing marketing capable of attracting new tourism and promoting products linked to the image of the territory. In this context, the territory becomes the quality 'trademark' of local products, the icon that promotes their distribution and guarantees their quality. The set of valorisation proposals for local development gives rise to a Manifesto (see Figures 1 and 6) which describes some principles for policies and projects to renew the rural environment and promote sustainable landscape strategies for the rural territory in association with the city.

**Fig. 6.** Guidelines for ecological and functional-fruitful structure and local projects.

### Aknoledgement

The contribution is written through the collaboration of the two authors, but the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph are written by Angioletta Voghera and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> by Attilia Peano.

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### A 'Manifesto' for the landscape and rural development

- . The rural territory represents the future of the city and agriculture and is a central part of their innovation
  - because the city needs space for infrastructures and entertainment
  - because it fulfils the desire of city-dwellers for country produce and sceneries
  - because it is important for the environmental harmony of the territory
  - because it is the resource of a new agricultural economy
- 2 . On the other hand, in theory the rural world has control over the use of the soil, but in practice it is not autonomous and is conditioned by the city
- because all transformations of the rural environment are influenced by the city thanks to information
  - because the rural environment is conditioned by the needs and models of urban life.
- 3 . It is important to build an agreement of natural and social cohesion between town and country, based on principles of sustainable development
- because the relationship between community and management of the rural territory has been irreversibly broken
  - because there is a progressive erosion of environmental and landscape resources
  - because there is expected to be a progressive weakening of traditional agriculture.
- 4 . The essence of the cohesion agreement between town and country consists of, on the one hand, preventing the waste of natural and cultural resources by the city and, on the other, making the rural world more immediately useful to the urban world through products and services.
- 5 . Future rural development must follow the path of multisectorial and multifunctional integration, both of which are characteristics that are closely linked to the territory.
- 6 . The rural landscape, in terms of its ecological, cultural, economic aspects and identity, constitutes an indispensable resource for multifunctional and multisectorial development.
- 7 . A project for the landscape and rural development integrated into the project for the new city may attract and encourage visibility thanks to new production, settlement and fruitive qualities.
- 8 . Consequently, the rural landscape project involves:
- intra-urban natural and agricultural spaces
  - peri-urban spaces that are still characterised by traces of rural organisation
  - spaces that are predominantly rural
- 9 . The rural landscape needs policies, projects and integrated actions to
- provide a foundation and prospects for multifunctional agriculture
  - preserve and reconstruct an ecological equilibrium
  - valorise the matrices of predominant historical permanency
  - plan functional and fruitive reorganisation
  - promote the formation of new community dimensions
  - incentivise local development processes
10. It is possible to support the rural landscape through
- legislative, financial and technical action
  - documentation and research on the environment, culture assets, rural economy
  - promotion of associations and local entertainment
  - incentivise institutional and social cooperation
  - development of common projects between rural and urban communities
  - recognition of different players in the areas of conservation and development

#### specific indications

##### *for urban and territorial planning:*

- in accordance with the regional law for urban planning no. 56/1977, redefining new subjects and objectives for territorial and rural landscape planning
- rethinking the analyses and contents of strategic and structural planning with particular attention paid to interdisciplinary and territorial integration between metropolitan and rural areas
- redefining the term "local" by going beyond the administrative perspective as the sole reference for the creation of plans and involvement of players
- identifying forms of compensation for the creation of a soil bank, strategically located with regard to environmental requalification and valorisation choices, also as an alternative to applying charges and to assigning areas for expansion
- defining a traffic and transport plan at regional and metropolitan level, which takes account of the new environmental and fruitive role of the rural areas
- increasing the supply of residential quality in the city through improvement actions for the intra-urban and peri-urban territory, with a view to discouraging the demand for living away from the city
- checking the erosion and fragmentation of agricultural terrain through suitable localisation and typology choices in urban development schemes and in the installation of new facilities.

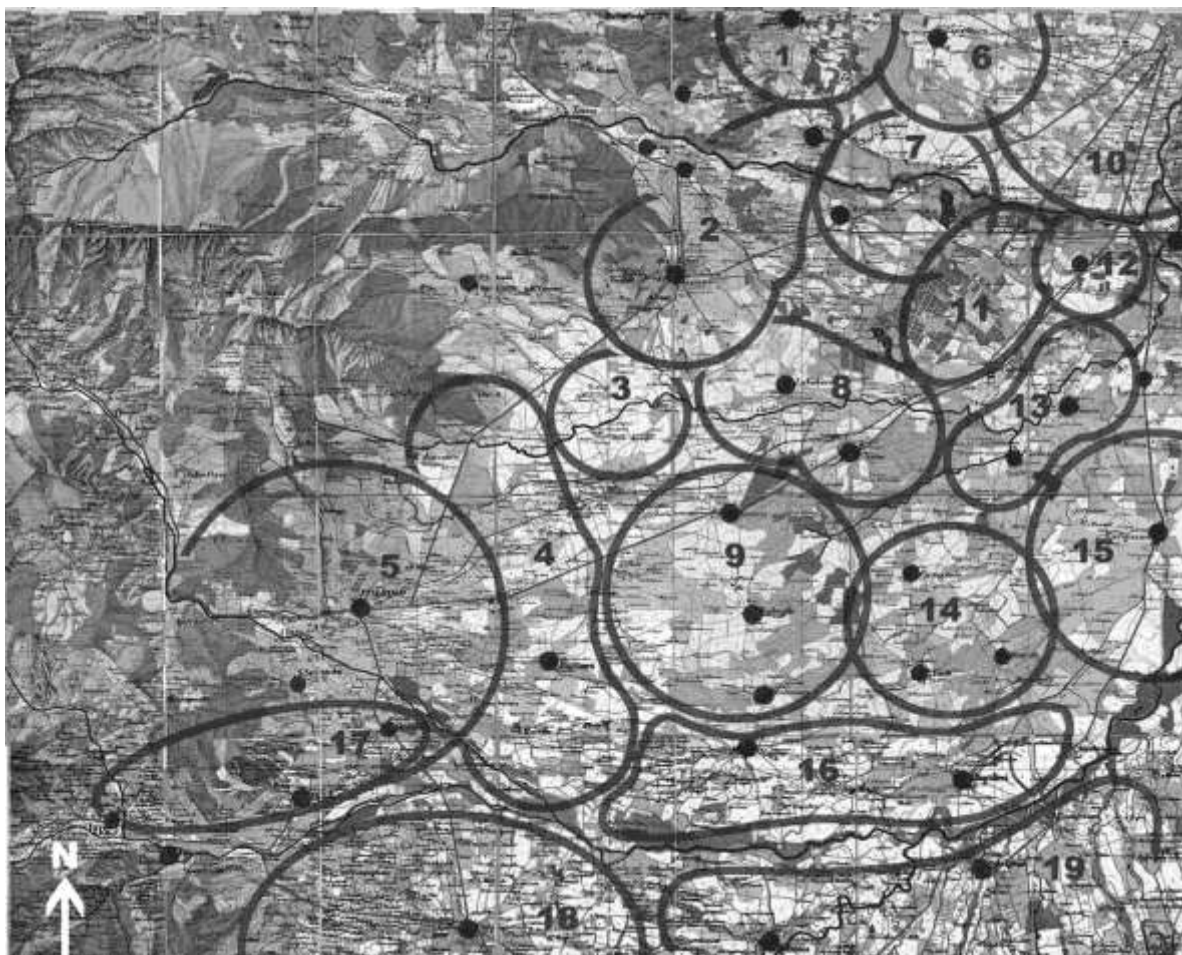
##### *for management:*

refunctionalise the exiting legislative and planning framework for the sector, to bring it in line with policies and integrated actions for the rural landscape

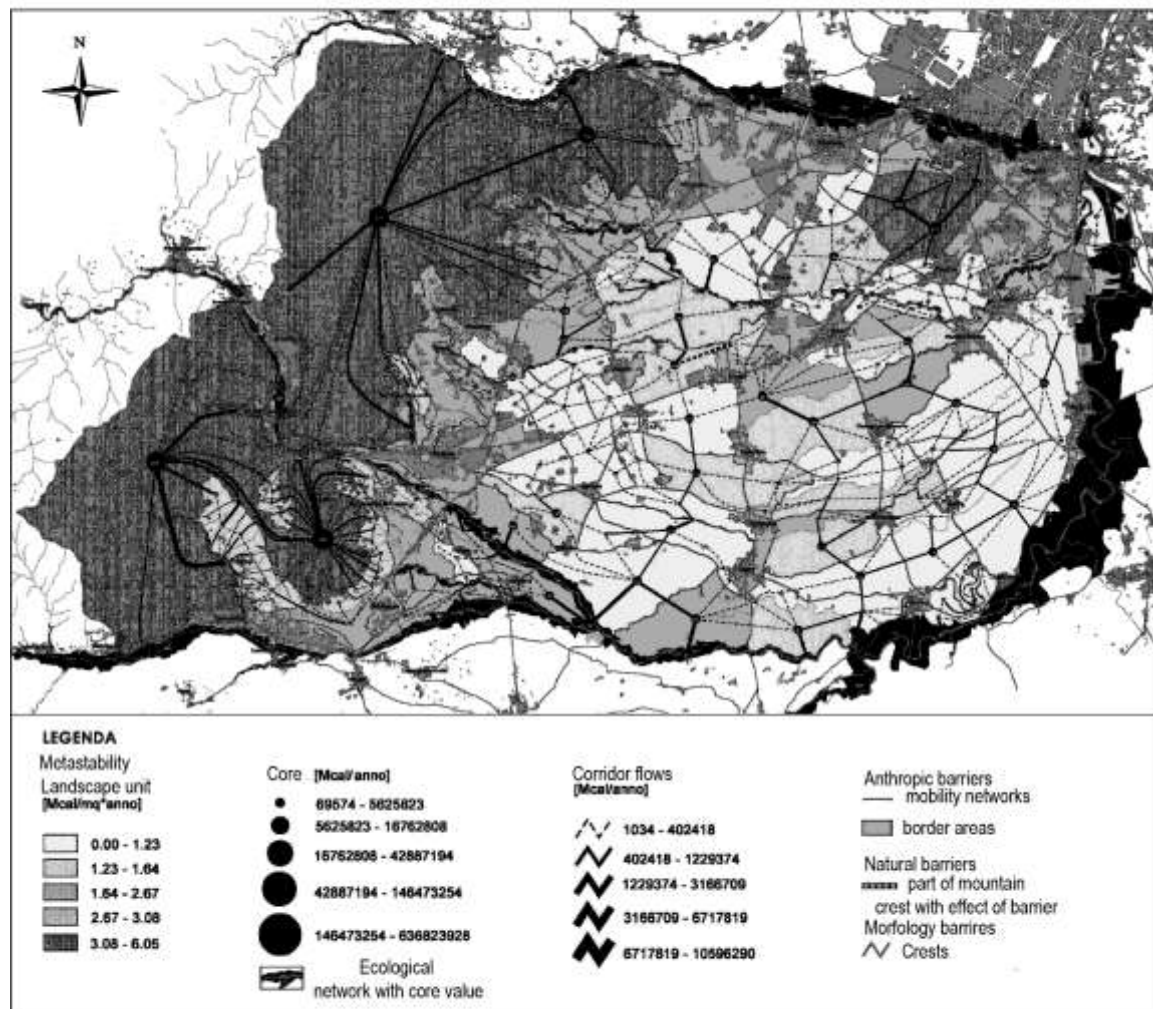
**Fig. 1.** A "Manifesto" for the Landscape And Rural Development.



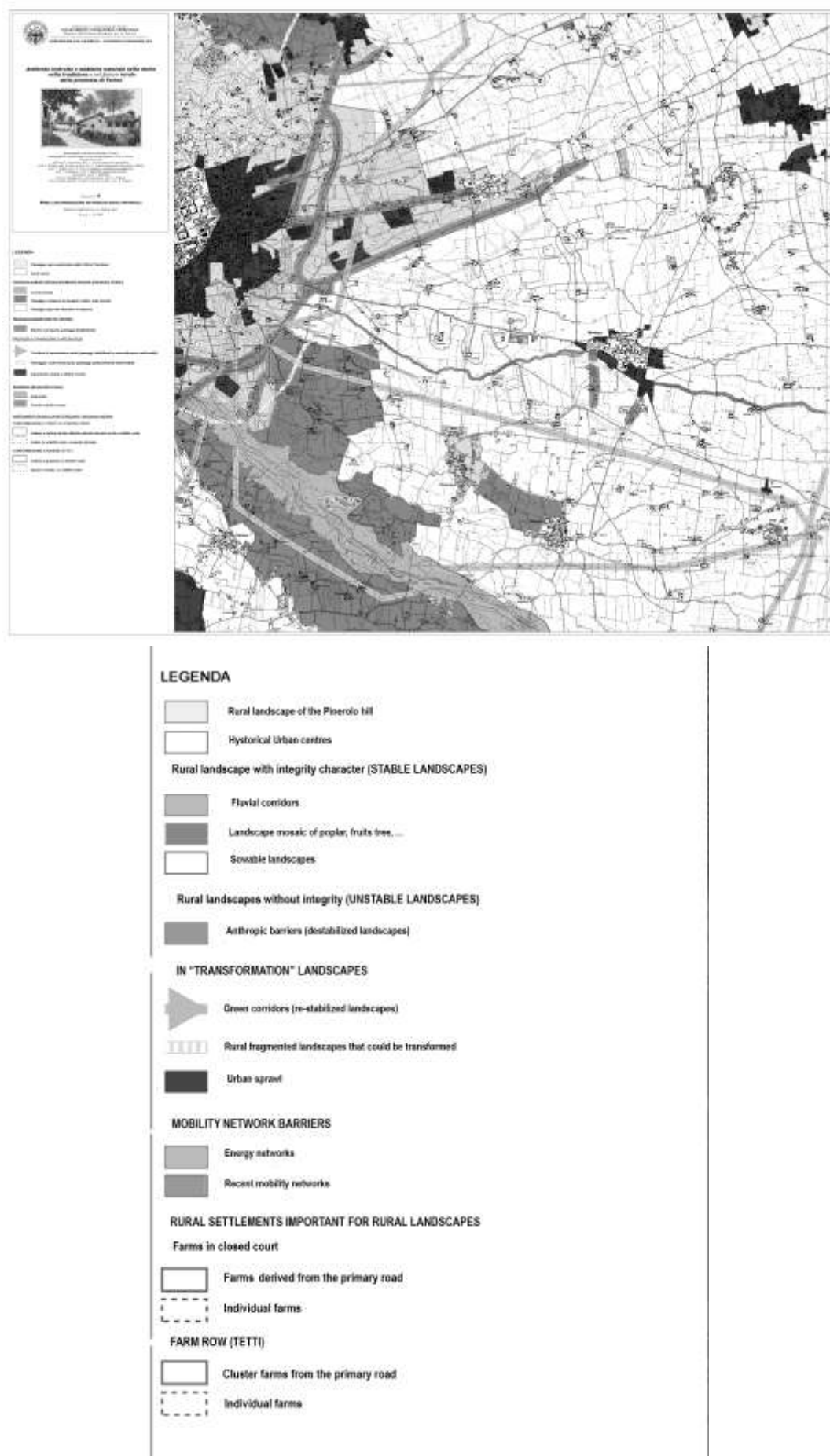




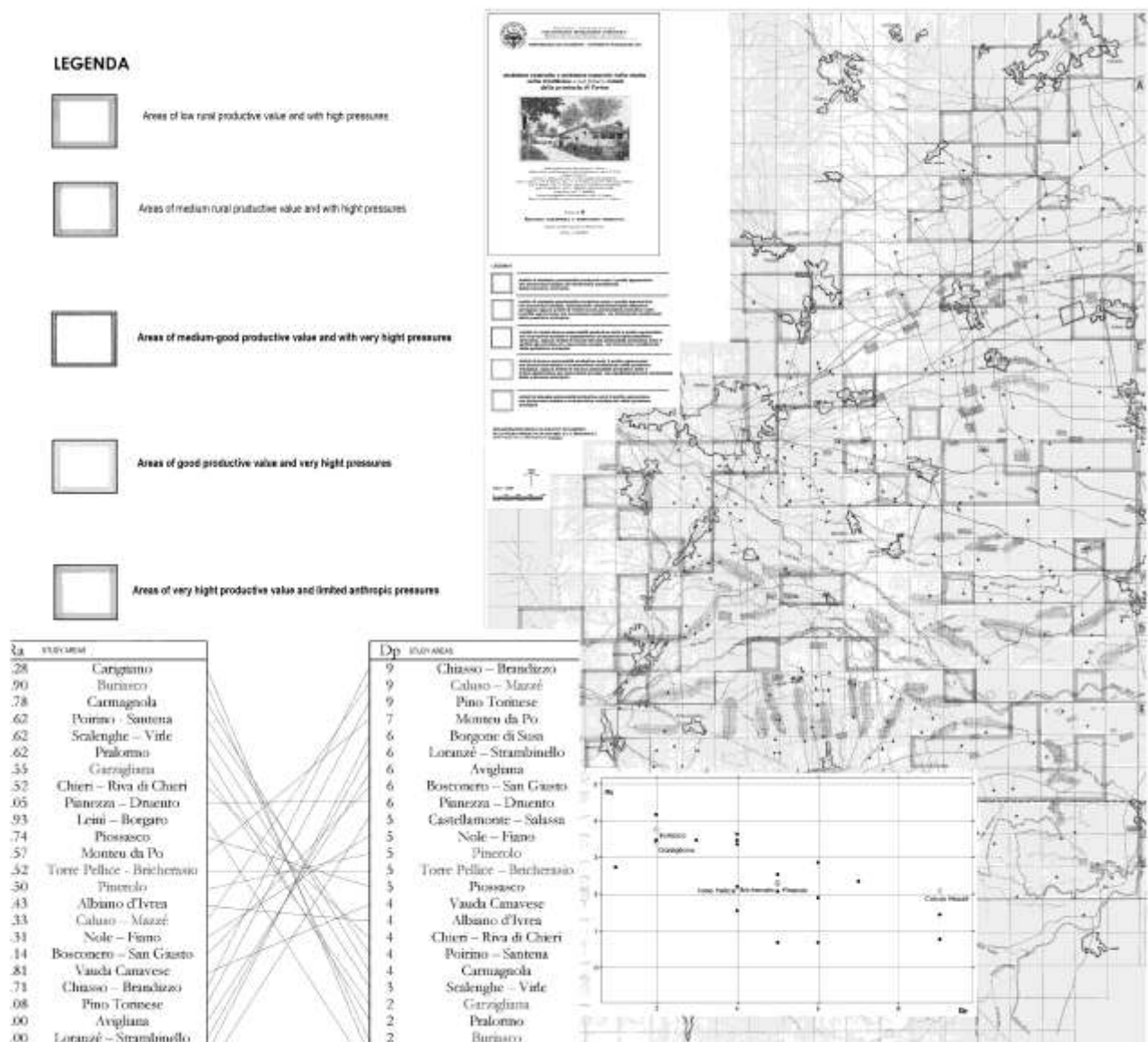
**Fig. 2.** Rural soil uses on the 1852 ('Carta Topografica degli Stati in Terraferma di S.M. il Re di Sardegna alla scala di 1 a 50.000 opera del Corpo Reale dello Stato Maggiore').

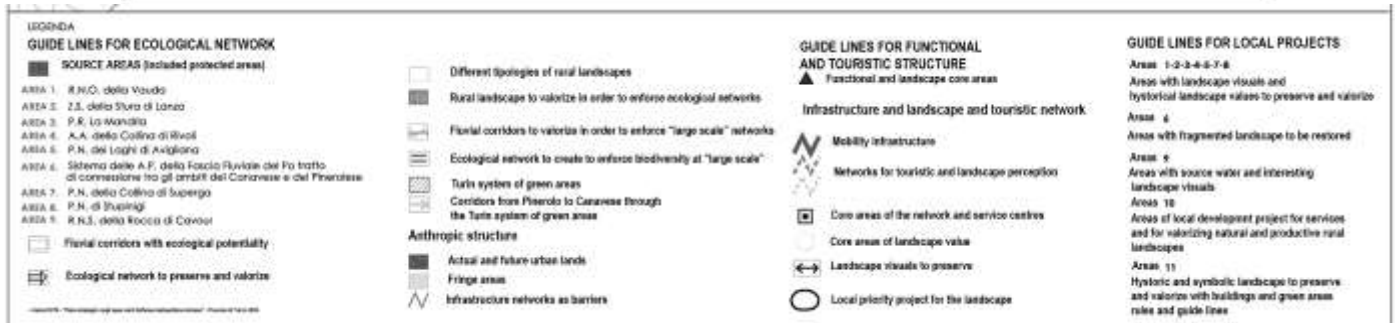
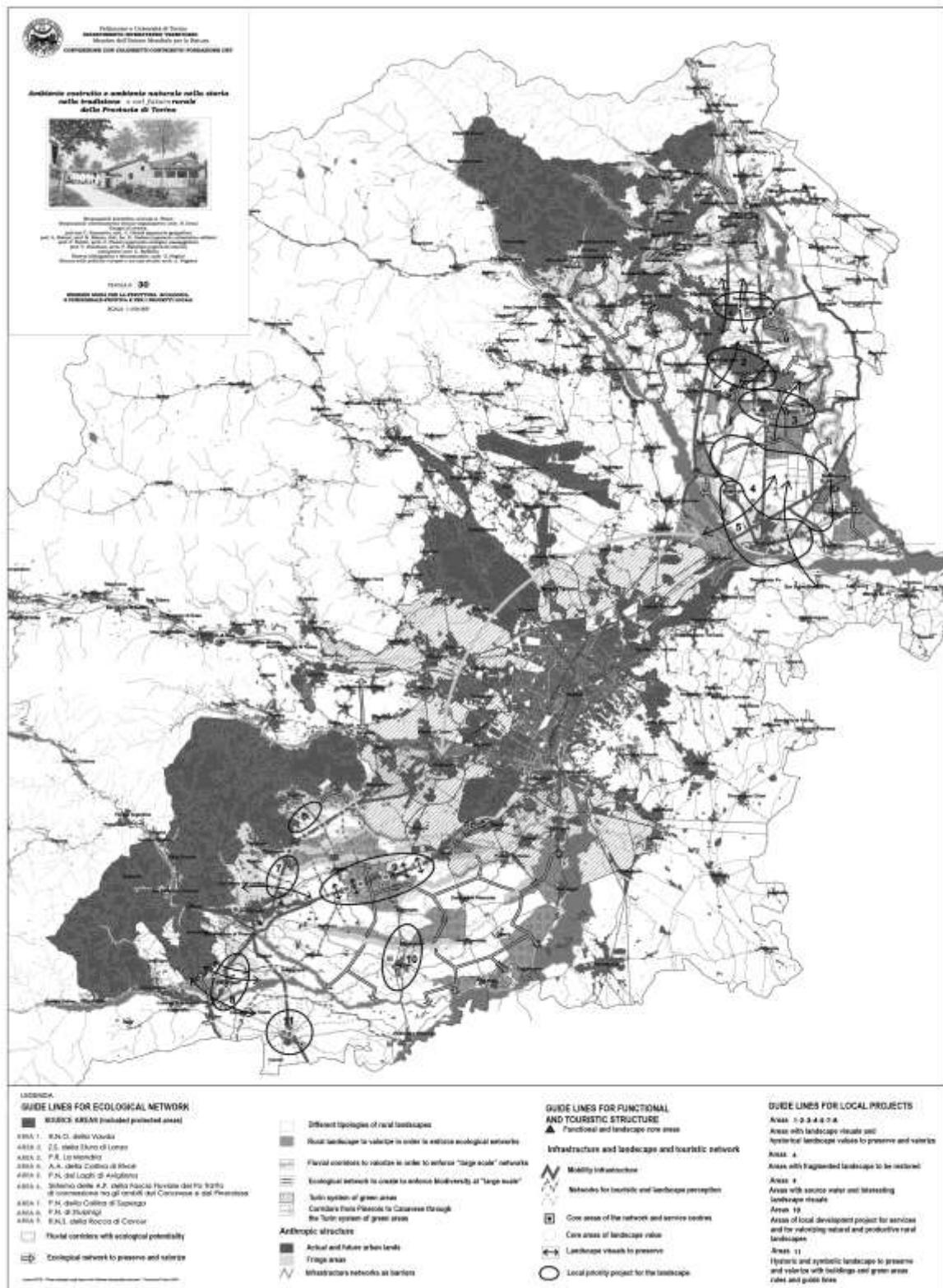


**Fig. 3.** Ecological analysis of the Pinerolo study case. In dark grey: source areas that need to be connected by ecological network in east-west direction .



*Fig. 4.* Stable, unstable and 'in transformation' landscapes. An analysis of the Pinerolo study case.





**Fig. 6.** Guidelines for the Ecological and Functional-Fruitive Structure and for Local Projects.